

THE THRILLING ADVENTURES OF DICK ANTHONY OF ARRAN :: By TALBOT MUNDY

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A wester was blowing savage seas against the coast of Palestine, and the steamers trading up and down beam on to it made heavy weather. Half of the time the Thermistokes whirled her one propeller in the air.

There were only three passengers who did not suffer on the ship's account. One of them—the Princess Karageorgovich—was too interested; Andry Macdougal was too hard bitten; and the third—Dick Anthony—scarcely have suffered just at that time on a redhot grid.

As a fugitive from justice—a Scottish gentleman of decent birth and nice distinctions—life held no very luring bait for him, and death, with a spice of accident, looked, smelled and tasted good.

It was Andry who drew a cord unwittingly and loosed the dogs of war.

Andry due his bagpipes from a box beneath the bunk and struggled forward.

A few stray notes blew back along the deck to where the Princess Olga nestled in a steamer chair. She writhed each time the bagpipe music reached her.

One can be Scots, and have pity on the weaker sex. With his tawny hair blown into jungle by the wet, salt wind, Dick Anthony leaned forward and asked a question. Wind snatched the words, but not its meaning.

"Do the pipes get on your nerves?" he asked.

"One gets used to them."

He was a human man, and he looked her for an ungrudging minute in the eye, giving her all the admiration she could claim—and that was a prodigious quantity; from such a man as Dick it was incomparable; it made her delicious. Then he turned on his heel and left her.

Even as he struggled forward, leaning into the wind with dirty scupper slush aside between his feet and his arms outspread to grasp things, he looked different from other men—more dignified and less self-conscious. She left her seat and clung to a rail to watch him, knowing well that he would have laughed at her had he known it.

"Give them here, Andry!" he ordered; and the giant gave up his pipes with an expression of obedient resentment.

"There's a lady aft who doesn't like pipe music. I'll put these in the bag with mine."

Dick packed away the bagpipes and avoided the princess all afternoon. He avoided her again at dinner time by going without food, depending on Andry, who did not believe in missing meals, to watch the points for him without further definite instructions.

Fate helped out the next move certainly. The princess ran into Dick at a moment when there was no room to spare.

"Thank you very much for stopping the music," said the princess.

"Not at all," said Dick uncomfortably.

The ship gave a terrific lurch. She clung to a handrail with both hands and closed her eyes in common manliness to offer her arm. Nor could he escape the ordinary civility of helping her to a chair.

"Thank you, Mr. Anthony," she said quizzically.

He had to stoop to listen, for the engines were arguing with a rising sea.

"Are we enemies?" she asked.

"Yes," he said simply, and she laughed strainingly as he dimpled, delighted.

"Then, my enemy, this is the flag of truce!"

She produced a white handkerchief—pink, lace-edged, radiantly tiny. Dick pulled out his impulsive fingers, too, and his laugh, as usual, calmed his own temper as well as other people's.

Dick went in search of a camp stool. He set it in a corner close to her, where he could watch her face.

"I am sorry for you, Mr. Anthony. You and I are now between you. You killed nearly a dozen men in Alexandria. You are an outlaw. How will you escape?"

"Jezabel!" he hissed. "I have ma orders."

Her agile brain was searching for another plan when a splash came that would have sent her heart into Andry's hands.

She stopped at last to lean on his ear and listen, the princess bent forward, laying a hand on his enormous one.

"Leave us here and swim back to him," she urged.

"'Zebel!" he hissed. "I have ma orders."

He could see that her eyes were violet and languorous (when she chose to have them so).

"It was my fault," she said then. "I should have told you first. But who would dream of a man like you? You confessed malcontent, poor, proud and at a loose end, refusing the offer of a king."

"Admit you were unreasonable, Mr. Anthony."

"I was free of the world when I first saw you," he answered. "And I never intended you to interfere."

She avoided her angle attack with a suddenness that would have bewildered many men.

"You blame me," she insisted, "but you gave me neither time nor chance to make difficult arrangements. Instead of refusing soberly and treating my disclosures to you as confidences—"

"They were uninvited."

"You fled, and you left me no course but to catch you."

"I knew nothing about your plans and cared less," said Dick. "You want to know what I think of you? I'll remind you that you're above me."

"I'm afraid you're right. Imagine yourself in my position, Mr. Anthony. Try. I offered you a kingdom, you remember—a kingdom and Russia's buckling. For some reason that you don't profess to understand, you refused it. After more than a moment's notice, and offered instant fight. You seized me most ungraciously, ripped my belt, betrayed my safety, to meet your own when it was a secret upset the plans of Russia's plan that had cost millions balked Russia's plans in Persia, and made Egypt and all British territory too hot for me and for you—excepting, of course, one man. And you complain because I called on them to kill you in the heat of that mad minute?"

"I did not hear myself complain," said Dick.

"You forgot that you made your escape in my carriage, leaving me 'in the sun,' as your idiom is. It was only by the most extraordinary luck that I contrived to find my hotel, and later than the Thermistokes. They had booked for Trebizond with my maid and luggage. Now I too, am an outlaw. Are you imagining yourself in my position, Mr. Anthony?"

"In my position—when you reached Russia—as I shall reach Russia—you would no longer be a fugitive from justice," said Dick; and she heard him catch his breath.

"You are a fugitive," she sat bolt upright, and told the off points with a fierce, stony stare. "You do not set foot on British territory, and the wireless waves are surely out against you everywhere. You are lost. You are ruined, Mr. Anthony."

She understood, and yet she did not seem to know when she had been beaten. "It is my business, and not yours," said Dick.

"In my shoes, would you not ask forgiveness and try to make amends?" Not a word said Dick, and he heard him offering her, Mr. Anthony, the protection of the Russian government.

"No thanks," said Dick, and he arose to offer her his arm.

She drew him out to know when she had failed. She took his arm, and let him lead her to the head of the companion.

"My offer stands," she smiled over her shoulder as she left him.

"So does my refusal," answered Dick, and he strode on to the dark deck again.

Dick went below at midnight. Too different to undress, he lay with his clothes on, watching cockroaches hunt the cabin floor and listening to Andry advertising five cabins down the starboard corridor.

Without warning, a shock came—a thousand-ton weight blow, with no anvil ring at all, but a shudder and the sickening, violent feel and sound of steel plates bending inward. Then the lights went out.

Andry woke and left his cabin like a wolf, back, cabin door by foot, where Dick thundered on the panels. The struts of the shock and the jolt had jammed the door tight. In a moment Andry had stepped across the cabin floor, and he granted as his shoulders took the strain. The door creaked once and then went in, frame and all, as if a typhoon struck it. The door and Dick were still in the cabin corner.

"Are ye dressed?" demanded Andry.

"Yes. Get off me. Man, you weigh a ton."

"Is the bag packed?" Aye; I have it on the chaymore, here; I have them baith."

"Come on," called Dick. And all that night he enjoyed Egypt, and was ready for a more important adventure. He had sold his horses and was little more than a beggar, but the word went around that "She" had a ready leader. So he hurried by train to Alexandria.

Observant, as his countrymen all are, he examined Dick Anthony, and Dick's giant attendant in the street. Some time ago he had decided in his own mind that the princess must be "She" who paid and issued orders; but she also had the field to herself, and a wonderful imagination in addition to a sound true basis for romance: she said enough to bring the Tartar out through the Red Sea port.

She made Dick no more overtures of friendship, nor did she pretend any familiarity with him. The details of what he had done, calculated to impress her, she had not the field to herself, and a hundred more conspirators knew that instant that they had the man if only he would leave and be dead follow.

When Dick sawed the quivering blade above his head in proof of ownership, it had been Ubash Ali Khan who shouted "Zindabad Anthony Shah!" He had led the crowd shouting, "Long live King Anthony!" Late to leave the room at "Her" bidding, he had stood nearest to the door. He had seen Dick rip "Her"

FOUL OF THE CZAR

Then she climbed to the bridge and talked more than a little with the captain.

England is not the only land that produces gallant adventures, and such a one may be Ubash Ali Khan, the Afghan. If his features were the least bit Semitic, and his skin light olive, he was none the less strikingly handsome on account of his dark hair and the sickening, violent feel and sound of steel plates bending inward. Then the lights went out.

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use him—with Russia's aid that she must win him. For the present she must steer Dick Anthony to Russia—and that seemed easy, seeing he had booked for Trebizond. He had come to the way to Trebizond; she took care that a maid in broken English, and she gathered—observing closely over the bridge rail—that the information delighted her.

Savagery is skin to bone in certain natures. Dick was sitting on a coil of rope, with his head between his hands, from a dozen knife cuts, dizzy with exhaustion, and waiting for a leader.

On the whole, he enjoyed Egypt. But he knew his duty to the peace, and as he was ready for a more important adventure was simmering beneath French rule. He had sold his horses and was little more than a beggar, but the word went around that "She" had a ready leader. So he hurried by train to Alexandria.

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